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ABSTRACT

Demographic surveys and data could be used to assess programs and policies directly and indirectly concerned with the reduction of poverty, and, through the use of such survey data, to point to a number of population subgroupings which are or are not moving out of poverty. Annually collected Census Bureau facts, the basis of much of the analysis presented in this paper, can be used to make more intelligent program-decision progress in the war against poverty. These facts, organized in terms of age, family status and size, race, sex, region, work experience and occupations, etc., must have several of these variables combined in order to be practicable. Tables reporting age differences only, or white-nonwhite differences only, for example, tend to contribute spurious information for operating purposes. Furthermore such data must be studied in the form of time trends in order to detect degrees of progress for specific population categories. Topics covered in this paper include Special Hard-Core Poverty Groups, The Social Geography of Poverty, Family Size, and The Search for Causes and Solutions. (CH)

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A Search for New Directions in the War Against Poverty

A Reprint of the Appendix Paper in
Toward Economic Security for the Poor
Prepared by the
Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty
of the
Committee on Labor and Public Welfare
United States Senate
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By
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December 1968

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The W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

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Preface

This paper is a reprint of a study written by the author as staff consultant to the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate. Its chief purposes are to suggest how demographic surveys and data may be used in assessing programs and policies directly and indirectly concerned with the reduction of poverty; and, through the use of such survey data, to point to a number of population subgroupings which are or are not moving out of poverty. It is hoped that publication of the study in this separate form will lead to a wider discussion of the potentials of such an approach in improving our nation's attempts to alleviate the various forms of poverty.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the subcommittee or of its individual members; nor do they necessarily represent the position of the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Harold L. Sheppard

Washington, D.C.
October 1968

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APPENDIX

A SEARCH FOR NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE WAR AGAINST POVERTY

By Harold L. Sheppard, Staff Consultant to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty

INTRODUCTION

This statement is essentially a plea for the development and use of detailed population statistics and analysis (demography) in understanding and attacking the problem of poverty in the United States. As far as the author can determine, little, if any, use of such an approach is being made by administrators or legislators.

As a way of creating greater appreciation of this approach in the Nation's efforts to reduce poverty, the pages that follow deal with examples of groups within the total population whose *rates* of poverty (or whose numbers living in poverty) have declined the least since 1959; the *regional* distribution of the poverty population—including a consideration of degree of urbanization; the topic of *work* and poverty; the role of family size, et cetera.

There is no detailed attempt, however, to spell out all the program implications of the facts and analysis presented in this report. The major purpose is to demonstrate how the use of specific demographic data and analysis could be used in the systematic formulation of policy.

The program devoted to the reduction of poverty in America and its various organizational mechanisms were launched before any truly detailed analysis of the "anatomy of poverty" was made available. In effect, the facts necessary for an intelligent approach to the problem followed upon the political decision to meet that problem. The Office of Economic Opportunity, therefore, was not able to structure its program completely in accordance with such information, when it launched its efforts in 1965.

It is always difficult to shift organizational structures and program priorities to make them fit better with the social realities of a given problem—in this case, which groups or population categories are moving out of poverty the least, the most, or not at all; which groups have the greatest numbers, etc.—but it must be stressed here that a plan for a conscious adjustment to such realities is necessary. Steps for the implementation of such a plan must be taken immediately upon completion of the plan's design. Furthermore, a comprehensive "systems" outlook would be a valuable approach to evaluation of the progress of the country's attack on poverty.

At the same time, it should be recognized that this attack is in reality only a very small subsystem. If other parts of the system (e.g., the general employment picture, our precollege educational structure, population growth patterns, etc.) are not working properly, OEO's programs and those related to it can become quite ineffectual—even with the best of internal organization and policymaking adaptability.

A. Need for Demographic Analysis

There is a great need to make use of annually collected Census Bureau facts which are the basis of much of the analysis presented here, in order to make more intelligent program-decision progress in

the war against poverty.[1] These facts can be organized in terms of age, family status and size, race, sex, region, work experience and occupation, etc. It is important that several of these variables be combined in order to be practical. Tables reporting age differences only, or white-nonwhite differences only, for example, tend to contribute spurious information for operating purposes. Furthermore such data must be studied in the form of time trends, in order to detect degrees of progress for specific population categories.

Equally important, it should also be possible to determine the effectiveness of selected antipoverty programs by providing data—gathered through the same method—on the nature and degree of participation by various poverty subgroups in the wide range of these programs. Such information is vitally required if we are genuinely seeking those means which move persons and families out of poverty in the short and long run. The approach would also tell us where the major emphases in the implementation of the Economic Opportunity Act, and/or in new legislation, should be placed.

The major point in this report is that, just as in the case of the use of epidemiology in the battle against illness and disease, demographic research is necessary to determine whether (and to what extent) any particular technique, program, or policy is producing a reduction in poverty in specific populations—no matter how poverty is defined. Because it can be useful in revealing the distribution of poverty (at least in the *measurable* dimensions of poverty), this type of demographic analysis can provide a *perspective* regarding the planning of policies, programs, services, and techniques for the elimination or reduction of poverty. In my opinion, it is the necessary research approach for determining whether what is being done in a given area or group is actually reducing the incidence of poverty.

Unfortunately, there have been few, if any, systematic evaluations of the antipoverty program that concentrate specifically and directly on the question of the degree to which given programs have reduced poverty within *specific* population subgroups, or which have improved the conditions which raise the chances of these subgroups for moving out of poverty.

B. The Limitations of the Economic Opportunity Act

But we need no evaluations to recognize that given the extreme budgetary restraints imposed on the Office of Economic Opportunity and its delegate agencies, it is doubtful that substantially greater numbers of the poor will be reached than to date, or that significant numbers will be immediately moved from poverty this year or next.

The present limited war against poverty is even more limited with respect to producing *immediate* reductions in the numbers of poor Americans. Under the best of circumstances, the OEO program instead is primarily a long-term investment and the dividends cannot be realized overnight. It is not a get-rich-quick scheme. This fundamental feature of the program in part explains the attacks on OEO, from many poor persons who had expected miracles, and from other quarters

[1] Throughout this report, "poverty" is defined in terms of the criteria used by OEO following the approach developed by Mollie Orshansky of the Social Security Administration. It is based on family income weighed for size and residence of family, age and sex of head, etc. The definition is a useful one as a baseline for comparing population subcategories and measuring change over time.

intrinsically opposed to Government programs that go beyond the traditional approaches of merely alleviating poverty. Certainly a program that devotes the bulk of its program funds to stimulating learning among preschool children and to effecting occupational and behavioral skills among teenagers, along with the myriad of supportive services found necessary to carry out such efforts, will not lower the numbers of poor in the next few months or years.

The same point can be made with respect to some of the specific components of the community action program. Seeking the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in neighborhood activities and in boards associated with those activities is at best an indirect means of creating new feelings of personal and group efficacy in coping with individual and community problems associated with poverty. Its effects on rates of poverty will not be measurable in any short-term period. This search for self-confidence is a highly subtle and at times delicate process. For many of the more fortunate Americans, this feeling of efficacy is taken for granted, not even recognized as an indispensable condition for their own success and well-being. They frequently do not tolerate the "growing pains" involved in attempts to induce the same condition among the less fortunate.

C. Special Hard-Core Poverty Groups

Even if the OEO budget were multiplied tenfold, the nature of its programs would bypass certain problems and categories of the poor.

1. For example, the problems of the elderly poor are essentially problems of inadequate retirement income. Only a small portion of such persons (even though a substantial number) could benefit from the types of programs that are possible under the legislation. Congress has sought nevertheless, through the amendments of 1967, to stimulate greater attention on the part of OEO and its delegate agencies to those elderly poor (including nearly 3 million poor persons 55–64 years of age) for whom existing OEO programs can be useful.

But the fact remains that even using the stringent standards of the definition of poverty for the elderly adopted by OEO, there were, prior to the 1967 social security legislation, more than 4 million persons 65 and older who were poor despite the fact that they received social security benefits. When we include aged nonbeneficiaries, the total number of aged poor comes to 5.3 million. The basic (but not necessarily the exclusive) solution obviously lies outside the scope of the OEO legislation, and more properly in the area of income maintenance (including meaningful increases in social security benefits). An adequate retirement income system (whether through social security or other current proposals, or through a combination of these) could immediately reduce the numbers of poor Americans by 16 percent.

2. In addition, there are over 1.5 million poor families of two or more persons headed by females under the age of 65. The total number of persons in such families is over 6 million, most of whom are children. About one-half of these women work but are still poor. Once again, an adequate income maintenance program—especially for those with children—may be the plausible approach to their problems of poverty. Such a program would reduce the numbers in poverty by roughly 18 to 20 percent.

If poverty were thus eliminated among both the elderly poor and among families with female heads, we could thereby effect a decrease in the poverty population by more than one-third, resulting in less than 19 million poor persons by present standards. If that were the case, the incidence of poverty would be only 10 percent instead of the present 15 percent (as of 1967). It is not widely recognized that *since 1959 there has been no change in the number of poor persons in the combined categories of 65 and older and persons in female-headed families.*

For the remaining 10 percent who are poor, there are many reasons to believe that the ongoing processes in our economy and society, along with "tailormade" programs such as work-training projects, will continue to move the younger, male-headed families out of poverty at a relatively fast pace.

3. There still remains the inconvenient fact that a large number of American men under 65 work but are nevertheless poor. About 2 million of them were poor despite the fact they worked full time all year. Nearly all of these were heads of families. An almsot equal number worked but less than full time on a year-round basis (400,00 because they were ill or disabled). The search for a solution to their problems leads us possibly to family allowances and unavoidably to the issues of adequate working wages and adequate unemployment compensation coverage and benefits—issues which are outside the scope of the OEO legislation. The magnitude of the problem is starkly revealed in the fact that as of 1965, the families of poor working males under 65 included more than 15 million persons—more than half of whom were children.

These three problem areas of the elderly poor, female heads of poor families, and of the working poor are cited primarily to stress the proposition that a truly systematic and comprehensive response to the challenge of eliminating poverty in our Nation would go far beyond the restricted scope of the current legislation. As stated earlier, given the existing organization, policy, and budget of the program administered by OEO and its delegate agencies, poverty will not be eliminated at any rapid rate. An effective, systematic, and comprehensive attack would not only require an increased budget over a prolonged period of time for OEO, but would also take us into areas such as income maintenance, economic development, general education, family planning, wage policy, and basic fiscal and monetary measures. A comprehensive application of the basic method of analysis used only illustratively in this report could possibly lead to policy recommendations that extend beyond the jurisdiction of one agency or organization.

D. The Social Geography of Poverty

What are the rates of poverty according to place of residence in terms of (a) rural-urban locations and (b) region of the Nation? And where are the poor distributed according to these two types of classification? Answers to these questions, too, should provide a major basis for the design of antipoverty programs.

1. While the *rate* of poverty is highest among residents of farm and rural nonfarm areas, we must not lose sight of the fact that most of the poor live *outside* of such areas. But despite the fact that less than 35 percent of all poor persons live in rural areas, it is also crucial

to note that a substantial part of the problem of urban poverty stems from the migration of rural poor persons to the urban areas.

This can be dramatically illustrated by referring to the sharp drop from 1959 to 1966 in the number of poor persons living on farms—from 6.8 million to 2.4 million in just 7 years! The difference of 4.4 million is due almost entirely to the migration of poor persons from farm areas. Indeed, the current rate of poverty in *non*farm areas would be significantly lower were it not for this mass migration of the farm poor.

This is clearly the case with regard to America's nonwhite poor. Between 1959 and 1966 the number of poor nonwhites living on farms decreased by more than 1.3 million, down to 897,000, but instead of a decrease among the *nonfarm* poor nonwhites, there was actually a slight increase of 204,000, up to 8.7 million. This increase in numbers below the poverty line among nonfarm nonwhites, however, should not obscure a more important point, namely, that the number of *nonpoor* persons in the nonwhite nonfarm population increased during these 7 years by nearly 4.7 million. These additional 4.7 million nonfarm persons consistuted a 54-percent increase in the number of nonfarm nonwhites out of poverty since 1959. In sharp contrast, the corresponding change among nonpoor *whites* in nonfarm areas was only 19 percent.

Finally, it should be noted that a major reason—if not *the* major reason—for the slight increase in the number of poor nonwhites living in nonfarm areas is that in the poor nonfarm population, the number of *children* increased by nearly 450,000. But there was an actual *decrease* from 1959 to 1966 in the number of nonfarm, nonwhite poor adults. Furthermore, in 1959, among nonwhite poor persons in nonfarm areas, children constituted exactly one-half of those persons, but by 1966, 54 percent were children. Children, in other words, have become an increasing proportion of the nonwhite poor in the nonfarm areas. *This is not true of nonwhites above the poverty line, or of poor whites.* More pointedly, in our standard metropolitan areas of 250,000 population and larger, children constitute more than 60 percent of the nonwhite poor living in families. Among nonwhites *above* the poverty line, however, less than 40 percent are children.

2. More than one-half of all poor persons in 1965 lived in metropolitan urban areas of 50,000 population of greater. But this varied widely according to region. The following table, based on family heads only, reveals the interregional differences:

DISTRIBUTION OF POOR FAMILIES, BY REGION AND RESIDENCE

[In percent]

	United States	Northeast	North central	South	West
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Rural	36.0	14.8	35.8	47.9	22.3
Small Urban [1]	13.1	6.7	14.3	15.2	12.1
Urban [2]	50.9	78.5	49.9	36.9	65.6
50,000 to 250,000	8.6	9.0	5.6	10.5	6.0
250,000 to 1,000,000	18.0	13.8	13.4	19.0	27.8
1,000,000 plus	24.2	55.7	31.0	7.4	31.8

[1] Populations between 2,500 and 50,000.
[2] Standard metropolitan areas (SMSA's).

Source: Derived by H. L. Sheppard from census data for 1965.

This table clearly shows that in the Northeast section of the United States, more than one-half (56 percent) of the poor families lived in the urban areas of more than 1 million population; in the North Central region, the largest proportion (nearly 36 percent) are in rural areas; in the South, nearly one-half (48 percent) are in rural areas; and in the West, nearly one-third (32 percent) were in urban areas with more than 1 million population.

3. As already stated, the risks of poverty are greater in rural areas than in the larger urban centers of the country. For families, the poverty rate is 22 percent in rural areas and declines to 9 percent in the SMSA's of 1 million or more. But once again, the rural and urban rates vary according to region:

RATE OF POVERTY AMONG FAMILIES, BY REGION AND RESIDENCE

	United States	Northeast	North central	South	West
Total	13.4	9.5	10.3	21.4	10.3
Farm	22.2	17.5	14.6	32.9	12.0
Rural nonfarm	22.4	12.0	16.0	30.9	17.0
Small urban	13.2	7.6	9.5	20.6	10.3
Urban	10.5	9.3	8.5	15.4	9.2
50,000 to 250,000	11.9	9.9	6.1	17.1	11.1
250,000 to 1,000,000	12.1	7.4	9.6	16.9	11.4
1,000,000 plus	9.2	9.9	8.7	11.2	7.6

Source: Bureau of Census data for 1965, collected in 1966 survey.

Poverty in rural areas varies by region. The poverty rate among families was as high as 33 percent in the rural farm South and only 12 percent in the rural West. In the urban metropolitan areas, it was as high as 17 percent in Southern areas with 50,000–250,000 population and only 8 percent in areas of more than 1 million in the West.

4. Taking all of the Nation's poor families, where are they to be found? The accompanying table for 1965 shows that 23 percent of all the Nation's poor families were in the rural South; 10 percent in large urban areas of more than 1 million population in the Northeast; 9 percent in areas of 50,000–250,000 in the South; 8 percent in rural areas of the north-central region; 7 percent in the South's very small urban places (2,500 to 50,000 population); 7 percent in 1 million-plus population areas of the north-central region—and the remainder scattered among the categories named in the table.

RESIDENTIAL AND REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POOR FAMILIES, 1965

[In percent]

	Northeast	North Central	South	West	All United States
Rural	2.7	7.7	22.8	2.9	36.1
Small urban	1.2	3.1	7.2	1.6	13.1
50,000 to 250,000	1.6	1.2	5.0	0.8	8.6
250,000 to 1,000,000	2.5	2.9	9.0	3.6	18.0
1,000,000 plus	9.9	6.7	3.5	4.2	24.3
Total	17.8	21.6	47.5	13.1	100.0

Total of rows and columns may not add to 100 because of rounding.

While the South had nearly one-half of all poor families in the United States, only 30 percent of all the Nation's families—nonpoor and poor

combined—resided in that region. Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of poor nonwhite families (64 percent) lived in the South as of 1966, and they were disproportionately concentrated in the rural areas of the South. Nearly six out of every 10 poor nonwhite families in the South lived in rural areas and very small towns as 1966.

5. In large part, the poverty of the Southern Negro is a product of the poverty of Southern agriculture and rural life. This can be seen from the fact that whereas slightly more than 70 percent of all nonwhite farm families in the South are poor, the incidence of poverty steadily declines in relationship to degree of urbanization, to less than 27 percent in those few very large urban areas in the South of more than 1 million population. Unfortunately, fewer than 18 percent of Southern Negro families reside in such large urban areas—in contrast to nearly 70 percent of those Negro families living *outside* of the South. But among those few Negro families living in the largest urban areas of the South (with more than 1 million population), the rate of poverty is not much greater than for those living in the large metropolitan areas in the rest of the country. Thus, the decline in the rate of poverty among Negroes is clearly related to degree of urbanization.

6. But a major paradox involved in the positive effects of urbanization upon rates of poverty—*for whites as well as nonwhites*—is one that is apparently not recognized by current students of poverty. The paradox is that *urbanization is definitely a progressive force in the reduction of poverty among those families headed by a male, nonwhite as well as white*—but this is not as true in the case of families headed by a female. For example, the rate of poverty among rural farm families headed by a male is 21 percent and it declines sharply to 6 percent in male-headed families in urban areas of 1 million population or larger. But the corresponding poverty rates for female-headed families are 38 percent in the farm areas and drops only to 31 percent in the largest urban areas. The data are even more dramatic if we concentrate on *children* and the differences in their rates of poverty according to degree of urbanization and whether they live in families headed by a male or female:

POVERTY RATE AMONG CHILDREN, ACCORDING TO SEX AND RESIDENCE OF FAMILY HEAD, 1965

[In percent]

	Farm	SMSA's 1,000,000-plus	Percentage difference in poverty rates
Living with:			
Male head	34	10	−70.6
Female head	65	56	−13.8

Source: Derived by H. L. Sheppard from census data.

The relatively small impact of urbanization upon rates of poverty among children in female-headed families, in contrast to its greater positive impact for those in male-headed families, takes on even greater significance when we bear in mind that in our large urban areas of 250,000 and more, children living with a female head number about 4.3 million—and that 2.4 million of these children are poor. And of this group of 2.4 million poor children living without a father, more than one-half are nonwhite.

We cannot continue to ignore the fact that urbanization is associated with an increase in the proportion of children living in families headed by a female (regardless of color) and that the risks of "growing up poor" are tremendously greater when a child is born and/or reared in such families. As a Nation, we are still confused as to the exact causes of this impact of urbanism, not to mention the design of solutions to the resultant social pathologies.

7. In the case of *nonwhite* poverty, the difference it makes to be born and/or reared in a male-headed family, as opposed to one with a female head, is magnified according to the extent and size of urbanization. In the rural farm population, it makes very little difference; but, as one traces the differences in the accompanying table, it is obvious that the risks of being a poor child if born and/or reared in a male-headed family dramatically decline the larger the urban setting; but at the same time the risks of poverty among children without a male head remain as high or even higher *regardless* of degree of urbanization. Furthermore, the discrepancy between child poverty rates for male- and female-headed families increases sharply as one moves along the continuum from rural farm to large urban metropolitan areas.

DISCREPANCY BETWEEN POVERTY RATES AMONG NONWHITE CHILDREN WITH MALE OR FEMALE HEAD, BY RESIDENCE, 1966

Residence	Rate among children with male head	Rate among children with female head	Female-male difference
Rural farm	81	79	−2
Nonfarm outside of SMSA's	65	83	+18
50,000 to 250,000 SMSA's	48	86	+38
SMSA's 250,000 plus	31	73	+42
1,000,000 plus only	27	73	+46

The same general point, with slight exceptions and without the dramatic discrepancies, applies to white poverty.

An equally critical fact is that both among whites and nonwhites the percentage of white *and* nonwhite poor children living in a female-headed family increases as one moves from the rural farm population on the continuum toward the largest urban concentrations of population:

PERCENT OF POOR CHILDREN LIVING IN FEMALE-HEADED FAMILIES, WHITE AND NONWHITE, 1966

Residence	White children	Nonwhite children
Rural farm	3	14
Nonfarm outside of SMSA's	19	29
50,000 to 250,000 SMSA's	32	43
SMSA's 250,000 plus	33	50
1,000,000 plus only	35	54

Source: Derived by H.L. Sheppard from census data collected in 1966, based on 1965 incomes.

The alarming aspect of this type of relationship is made discernible when one considers that it is clear from all of the previous material that (*a*) *degree* of urbanization (not merely rural versus urban as a totality) affects negatively the integrity of the father-mother type of

family; (*b*) in contrast to the desirable effects of degree of urbanization upon poverty rates for children in male-headed families, urbanization has little, if any, positive effect for children in families without a male head; and (*c*) degree of urbanization appears to *increase* the proportion of poor children living in families with a female head (the larger the population the greater the percentage of poor children without male heads).

The causes of these deleterious effects of urbanization have not been sufficiently examined to warrant any certain explanations. To speculate at this point would only invite unnecessary and unfruitful polemics. We certainly cannot stem in any major degree the trend toward urbanization, especially when we know that urbanization *in general* reduces the overall poverty rate. But the reasons for the three effects summarized in the previous paragraph must be systematically sought through careful research and analysis, in order to determine the effective solutions.

We do know, however, some of the consequences of growing up poor in female-headed families in a megalopolis. Many of these consequences are social-psychological in nature and they, in turn, have a bearing on the educational, occupational, and economic achievements of such children. Unfortunately, and to repeat, there is no clear understanding of the forces that are brought into playas a result of increased conglomerations of persons in urban areas, which in turn engender the disruptive and crippling effects implied here.

E. Work and Poverty

There is a widespread and deeply held belief that most, if not all, of the poor are poor because they do not work—and that they do not want to work. Reality contradicts this myth. In the first place, three-fifths of all poor family heads, hardly a minority of all poor family heads, worked in 1966, the latest year for which data are available. Among unrelated individuals, only 35 percent worked in 1965.

In evaluating such proportions, it is necessary to consider that among those family heads not working, about one-half were 65 years old or more. Among unrelated individuals, over 70 percent were elderly.

The myth under question here has been especially applied to poor nonwhites. But the reality reveals the following about work among poor nonwhites, in comparison with poor whites:

1. Among poor male family heads, 78 percent of the nonwhites worked in 1965, in comparison with only 68 percent of whites.
2. Among poor female family heads, 50 percent of nonwhites worked, in contrast to only 37 percent of whites.

Part of the discrepancy between the work experience of the white and nonwhite poor is due to the difference in age structure of the two groups (whites having a higher proportion of the elderly), but even if we eliminate the 65 and older population in the analysis, the myth that poor nonwhites have a lower proportion of workers than do poor whites still cannot be supported by the facts.

One way of demonstrating this is to eliminate in analysis as much as possible the differences in the age and sex composition, nonfarm-farm distribution, and family status between white and nonwhites,

by concentrating only on one age group, all in the nonfarm population, and all with the same characteristics regarding status as family head. The following table is based on only nonfarm male heads of families aged 22 through 54, and compares nonpoor and poor whites and nonwhites, for 1965.

WORK EXPERIENCE, 1965, OF WHITE AND NONWHITE NONFARM MALE FAMILY HEADS, 22 TO 54 YEARS OLD

[In percent]

	Poor		Nonpoor	
	White	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Worked all year:				
Full time	60.7	60.4	88.1	83.6
Part time	4.0	5.5	1.0	2.1
Worked part year:				
Full time	17.6	17.6	6.3	9.5
Part time	4.0	4.5	.6	.8
Didn't work	13.7	12.0	4.0	4.0

First of all, the table shows that poor nonwhites are virtually identical to poor whites in their proportion working all year or part of the year on a full-time basis. A slightly higher percentage of white poor male nonfarm family heads in the 22–54 age group did not work. Second, among the nonpoor, a higher proportion of whites than of nonwhites worked on a year-round full-time basis. Indeed, this difference explains in large part the lower rate of poverty among whites. In the specific group under analysis here (nonfarm male family heads 22–54 years old), 90 percent of all working whites (poor and non-poor) worked year round, full time, in comparison to only 83 percent of all working nonwhites. And the rate of poverty is naturally related to opportunities to work on such a basis. Nevertheless, because of differences in occupational status and family size, nonwhite males working year round, full time, had a higher rate of poverty.

Among those under 65 poor family heads who did not work in 1965, what are the reasons? Among male family heads, the overwhelming reason is illness or disability (59 percent of whites, 68 percent of nonwhites). Among female family heads, 83 percent of the whites and 68 percent of nonwhites are keeping house (table A).

The critical point in regard to the issue of work and poverty is that the vast majority of poor adults under the age of 65 are already working, and that among those who are not working, illness, disability, keeping house, school attendance, and inability to find work constitute nearly 90 percent of their reasons for not working. (See table A.)

But most important of all, we cannot neglect the fact that in 1965, 2.9 million heads of families and unrelated individuals were poor *despite* the fact that they worked full time all year. Another 3 million poor family heads and unrelated individuals worked during that year but on less than a full-time, year-round basis. These figures do not include other family members who worked.

Neither should we lose sight of the fact that more than 11 million persons lived in poor families whose heads worked all year in 1965—and that 56 percent of these family members were children under 18. To some extent, the family income of such working heads would be

TABLE A.—REASONS WHY UNDER-65 POOR DID NOT WORK IN 1965, BY SEX AND COLOR

[In percent]

I. FAMILY HEADS

	Whites		Nonwhites	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Reason for not working:				
Ill or disabled	59	6	68	18
Keeping house	(1)	83	----------	68
Going to school	10	4	10	3
Unable to find work	9	4	13	8
Other reasons	21	3	10	2
Number of heads (in thousands)	360	472	94	298

II. UNRELATED INDIVIDUALS

Reason for not working:				
Ill and disabled	41	23	51	47
Keeping house	----------	49	----------	24
Going to school	22	17	19	15
Unable to find work	16	3	12	5
Other reasons	21	8	19	9
Number of individuals (in thousands)	196	527	81	110

[1] Less than 1 percent.

Note: Columns may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Source: Derived by H. L. Sheppard from special tabulations by Census Bureau in 1966.

adequate were it not for large family size, but this should not detract from the major point that employment is no guarantee against poverty. (See table B.)

The prevalence of poverty despite employment is, of course, related to the nature of the occupations and industries in which men and women work. Certain occupations and industries carry with them high risks of low wages and/or small opportunities for year-round, full-time employment. Data are available only in terms of occupations and not industries, and the details of such information can be seen in the accompanying tables, pertaining to heads of families only.

The data reveal that the poor are clearly overrepresented in the following three occupational groups:

Farmers and farm managers;
Nonmine laborers;
Service workers (especially private household workers, of whom more than three-fifths are nonwhite females).

Forty-five percent of all employed heads of poor families are concentrated in these three occupations—as compared to only 15 percent of the nonpoor family heads.

In summary, then, the 1966 Census Bureau surveys reveal that (1) 2.3 million heads of poor families, and 3.2 million poor unrelated individuals did not work in 1965. (2) Among the 2.3 million heads, nearly one-half were 65 and older; and of the remaining 1.2 million (those under 65), more than three-fifths were female heads of families. Thus, the number of under-65 poor male heads not working in 1965 was only 460,000, and nearly two-thirds of them were ill or disabled. (3) Among the nonworking poor unrelated individuals, 71 percent were 65 and older, and 70 percent of the remaining 913,000 were women. Thus, the number of under-65 poor male unrelated individuals

TABLE B.—RATE OF POVERTY IN 1966 BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND OCCUPATION, RACE, AND SEX OF FAMILY HEAD

[Numbers in thousands]

Characteristic	All families				With male head				With female head			
	Total	Poor			Total	Poor			Total	Poor		
		Number	Percent	Percent distribution		Number	Percent	Percent distribution		Number	Percent	Percent distribution
	All families											
Total	48,922	6,086	12.4	100.0	43,751	4,276	9.8	100.0	5,172	1,810	35.0	100.0
Employment status and occupation of head:												
Employed, March 1967	38,885	3,020	7.8	49.6	36,293	2,376	6.5	55.6	2,593	641	24.7	35.4
Professional and technical workers	5,338	129	2.4	2.1	5,050	107	2.1	2.5	286	22	7.7	1.2
Farmers and farm managers	1,588	315	19.8	5.2	1,572	—309	19.7	7.2	16	6	(1)	.3
Managers, officials, and proprietors (except farm)	5,759	233	4.0	3.8	5,643	216	3.8	5.1	118	17	14.4	.9
Clerical and sales workers	5,146	225	4.4	3.7	4,323	124	2.9	2.9	823	100	12.2	5.5
Craftsmen and foremen	8,050	353	4.4	5.8	8,013	349	4.4	8.2	36	3	(1)	.2
Operatives	7,696	646	8.4	10.6	7,230	544	7.5	12.7	466	102	21.9	5.6
Service workers	3,011	585	19.4	9.6	2,192	212	9.7	5.0	820	373	45.5	20.6
Private household workers	282	154	54.6	2.5	13	2	(1)	(2)	270	152	56.3	8.4
Laborers (except mine)	2,297	533	23.2	8.9	2,270	515	22.7	12.0	28	18	(1)	1.0
Unemployed	904	248	27.4	4.1	780	180	23.1	4.2	124	68	54.8	3.8
Not in labor force	9,132	2,817	30.8	46.3	6,678	1,718	25.7	40.2	2,454	1,100	44.8	68.3
Number of earners in 1966:												
None	4,073	1,978	48.6	32.5	3,017	1,216	40.3	28.4	1,056	762	72.2	42.1
1	20,451	2,620	12.8	43.0	18,163	1,892	10.4	44.2	2,288	729	31.9	40.3
2	17,992	1,112	6.2	18.3	16,608	891	5.4	20.8	1,384	221	16.0	12.2
3 or more	6,405	376	5.9	6.2	5,961	278	4.7	6.5	443	100	5.5	5.5
	White families											
Total	44,017	4,375	9.9	100.0	40,007	3,264	8.2	100.0	4,010	1,111	27.7	100.0

Employment status and occupation of head:												
Employed, March 1967	35,261	2,070	5.9	47.3	33,254	1,710	5.1	52.4	2,006	358	17.8	32.2
Professional and technical workers	5,082	112	2.2	2.6	4,832	95	2.0	2.9	248	17	6.9	1.5
Farmers and farm managers	1,498	262	17.5	6.0	1,485	258	17.4	7.9	13	4	(1)	.4
Managers, officials, and proprietors (except farm)	5,622	216	3.8	4.9	5,513	202	3.7	6.2	109	15	13.8	1.4
Clerical and sales workers	4,819	188	3.9	4.3	4,063	102	2.5	3.1	756	86	11.4	7.7
Craftsmen and foremen	7,583	273	3.6	6.2	7,551	270	3.6	8.3	32	2	(1)	.2
Operatives	6,739	427	6.3	9.8	6,369	363	5.7	11.1	370	63	17.0	5.7
Service workers	2,244	302	13.5	6.9	1,782	140	7.9	4.3	463	161	34.8	14.5
Private household workers	93	37	(1)	.8	9	1	11.1	(2)	85	36	(1)	3.2
Laborers (except mine)	1,674	290	17.3	6.6	1,659	280	16.9	8.6	15	10	(1)	.9
Unemployed	733	150	20.5	3.4	654	117	17.9	3.6	79	33	(1)	3.0
Not in labor force	8,022	2,154	26.9	49.2	6,098	1,436	23.5	44.0	1,925	718	37.3	64.6
Number of earners in 1966:												
None	3,593	1,589	44.2	36.3	2,808	1,071	38.1	32.8	785	519	66.1	46.7
1	18,721	1,927	10.3	44.0	16,933	1,481	8.7	45.4	1,789	446	24.9	40.1
2	16,039	691	4.3	15.8	14,911	577	3.9	17.7	1,128	114	10.1	10.3
3 or more	5,663	168	3.0	3.8	5,354	136	2.5	4.2	308	33	10.7	3.0
					Nonwhite families							
Total	4,905	1,711	34.9	100.0	3,744	1,012	27.0	100.0	1,162	699	60.2	100.0
Employment status and occupation of head:												
Employed, March 1967	3,625	950	26.2	55.5	3,039	666	21.9	65.8	587	283	48.2	40.5
Professional and technical workers	256	17	6.6	1.0	218	12	5.5	1.2	38	5	(1)	.7
Farmers and farm managers	90	53	58.9	3.1	87	51	58.6	5.0	3	2	(1)	.3
Managers, officials, and proprietors (except farm)	137	16	11.7	.9	130	14	10.8	1.4	9	2	(1)	.3
Clerical and sales workers	327	36	11.0	2.1	260	22	8.5	2.2	67	14	(1)	2.0
Craftsmen and foremen	467	81	17.3	4.7	462	79	17.1	7.8	4	1	(1)	.1
Operatives	957	220	23.0	12.9	861	181	21.0	17.9	96	39	(1)	5.6
Service workers	767	284	37.0	16.6	410	72	17.6	7.1	357	212	59.4	30.3
Private household workers	189	117	61.9	6.8	4	1	25.0	.1	185	116	62.7	16.6
Laborers (except mine)	624	243	38.9	14.2	611	235	38.5	23.2	13	8	(1)	1.1
Unemployed	171	98	57.3	5.7	126	63	50.0	6.2	45	35	(1)	5.0
Not in labor force	1,109	663	59.8	38.7	580	282	48.6	27.9	529	382	72.2	54.6
Number of earners in 1966:												
None	480	389	81.0	22.7	209	145	69.4	14.3	271	243	89.7	34.8
1	1,730	693	40.1	40.5	1,230	411	33.4	40.6	499	283	56.7	40.5
2	1,953	421	21.6	24.6	1,697	314	18.5	31.0	256	107	41.8	15.3
3 or more	742	208	28.0	12.2	607	142	23.4	14.0	135	67	49.6	9.6

[1] Not shown for base less than 100,000.
[2] Less than 0.05 percent.

Source: Derived by the Social Security Administration from special tabulations by the Bureau of the Census from the Current Population Survey for March 1967.

not working in 1965 was only 260,000 and about two-fifths were ill or disabled. One-fifth were attending school, and 15 percent had sought employment but were unable to find any work.

F. Family Size

The 1967 amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act included a significant provision creating a national emphasis program on family planning as one of the most effective solutions to poverty in America. Despite the various emotional resistances to the concept of family planning and birth control, certain incontrovertible facts must be faced: First, the poor are increasingly made up of large families whose heads are among the least likely to be able to take advantage of emerging opportunities in our society and economy, because of the very fact of having many children.

CHILDREN IN LARGE FAMILIES AS PERCENT OF WHITE AND NONWHITE POOR, 1959 AND 1966

	1959	1966
White and nonwhite combined	17.7	20.0
White	14.4	15.7
Nonwhite	26.3	29.0

Note: Large families are defined here as those consisting of 5 or more children.

Source: Derived from census data by Harold L. Sheppard.

Second, persons who are born poor but rise occupationally and educationally (and thus financially) by the time they become adults are more likely to have been born into smaller poor families than those persons born poor who *remain* poor.[2]

In recent years, the movement out of poverty has been greatest among those families with fewer than five children—especially among nonwhites. For example, since 1959 the incidence of poverty among nonwhite familes with five or more children has declined very little in comparison with other nonwhite families. While nonwhite families with fewer than five children experienced a drop in their incidence of poverty at the rate of 32 percent over the 7-year period, those with five or more had a rate of decline of only 10 percent (from 71 percent in 1959 to 63.9 percent in 1966). In the case of female-headed nonwhite families, the rate actually *increased*, from 79 percent to 88 percent. Moreover, the number of children in such families increased phenomenally from 676,000 to 1,340,000 during this period.

There simply is no question at this point in the history of the social development of nonwhites as a group in America (whites, for the most part, having already undergone the process of urbanization-industrialization) that the lack of family planning is one of the retarding factors in their quest for a better way of life.

Children reared in large families, as well as their parents (especially when those parents are widowed, separated or divorced females), suffer from a number of handicaps that go beyond the obvious one of limited material resources. These other handicaps include fewer chances for continued education, a higher risk of poor health, and poor

[2] See H. L. Sheppard, *Phe Effects of Family Planning on Poverty in the United States* (Kalamazoo: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research 1967), pp. 11–15.

intellectual development that affect their long-run educational and occupational chances. The magnitude of the problem is actually understated [3] when we consider that in 1966, 45 percent of all poor children lived in homes with five or more children (38 percent in the case of white children, 55 percent in the case of nonwhites), and that these proportions have risen since 1959. Actually, there was a decrease in the number of such children in *male*-headed poor families (from 2.2 million to 1.6 million), but a significant increase of such large-family children with *female* headed from 0.7 million to 1.3 million). The critical determinant here, therefore, is not "race" per se, but family structure, as measured by the presence or absence of a father or husband.

The irony is that most families, poor and nonpoor, white and nonwhite, prefer small families. But the poor typically are unaware of birth control methods, cannot afford the usual devices, or do not have access to family planning services. The evidence, however, is clear that when these three obstacles are removed, a substantial portion of the poor—white and nonwhite—begin to accept and adopt the practice of family planning to better their own lives as well as the lives of the children they want to have.

It is crucial that OEO (as well as the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare) communicate effectively to the local communities about information on the impact that family planning can have on the fight against poverty—as measured in the agencies' own cost-effectiveness studies.

Many of the various specific measures to eliminate poverty in American families now in existence or being contemplated can have at best only limited success if we continue to blind ourselves to this demographic facet of the problem. Furthermore, a widespread introduction of family planning services and their acceptance will make more palatable and feasible such new proposals as guaranteed incomes, family allowances, etc.

We know that if families with a given income level had fewer children, such families would by definition no longer be poor since poverty here is construed in terms of both income and family size combined. But beyond this obvious effect of reduced family size the decrease in the number of poor children alone would be sizable even under conservative assumptions. For example, in 1966, there were nearly 6 million poor children in families with five or more children. If, after the fourth child, the number of births in poor families had been reduced by only 50 percent prior to 1966, there would have been in that year about 3 million fewer poor persons in this country—a reduction by 10 percent in the 30 million poor enumerated for that year. To repeat, this does not consider the possibility that such a lowering of family size would also have brought a number of families above the poverty line; therefore, the 10-percent reduction estimate is actually a conservative one.

Despite the fact that Congress in 1967 *authorized* a national OEO emphasis program for family planning (which constitutes a reordering of OEO's priorities), the same Congress—in its limited *appropriations* decision—acted in such a way as to negate effectively that significant

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[3] Understated because these figures include only those children currently in the family home and excludes those already grown or yet to be born.

1967 provision. Many other similar acts of legislative schizophrenia may be overlooked and excused, but in this case it is difficult for many observers to be tolerant. Although many national legislators object, as a general rule, to the practice of earmarking funds for specific programs, it may be necessary nevertheless to do so in the future, if the congressional appropriations process is to be made congruent with its authorization decisions.

It is regrettable that a program devoted to the prevention of future fires must be sacrificed in order to help put out the fires of the present. In a nation presumably as wealthy and resourceful as ours, the poverty of intent and will is greater than the poverty of income and social status that we originally started out to understand and overcome.

G. The Search for Causes and Solutions

No static snapshot of the "anatomy" of the poverty population can provide any insight into the nature of the problem of poverty. Such a snapshot can tell us only how many poor persons have this or that characteristic, and whether most or few of the poor have such and such a characteristic. But, to repeat, such information tells us nothing about the causes or solutions of poverty.

A major step toward such a goal would consist of a comparison of the poor with the nonpoor. (See table C.) For example, if we know that the poor, in comparison with the nonpoor, have a greater percentage of families headed by a female, we come closer to an understanding of the problem, even though it remains a fact that most heads of poor families nevertheless are males. This type of comparison is also arrived at by relating the *rate* (or percentage) of poverty in a

TABLE C.—SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF POOR AND NONPOOR FAMILIES, 1966
[In percent]

	Poor	Nonpoor
Total	100.0	100.0
I. Age of family members:		
Children under 18	51.3	36.5
18 to 24	8.3	10.7
25 to 54	24.7	37.6
55 to 64	6.4	8.3
65 and older	9.3	6.8
II. Color of family head:		
White	65.9	92.4
Nonwhite	34.1	7.6
III. Sex of family head:		
Male	71.9	92.5
Female	28.1	7.5
IV. Regional location of families:		
Northeast	17.8	26.1
North-central	21.6	29.2
South	47.5	27.0
West	13.1	17.7
V. Residence of families:		
Urban	64.6	81.1
Rural nonfarm	26.5	14.3
Rural farm	8.9	4.6
VI. Work experience of head:		
Worked in 1965	62.2	87.3
Did not work	37.8	12.7
VII. Size of family:		
2 to 3	48.7	54.2
4 to 5	25.9	33.4
6 or more	25.4	12.4

given population category to the rate of other categories. (See table D.)[4] Again, in the case of male-female comparisons, we know that in 1966, less than 10 percent of families with a male head, but 35 percent of families with a female head, were below the poverty line used in this report (derived by the Social Security Administration, and based on family income, size, and place of residence for the most part).

But equally important as a step toward a more reliable understanding of poverty is the presentation of *trends* from one point in time to another in the numbers or percentages of poor in different population categories. (See tables D and E.) For example, in 1959 there were

TABLE D.—CHANGE IN THE RATE OF POVERTY, 1959 TO 1966

	1959	1966	Percent change in rate
All persons	22.1	15.4	−30
Unrelated individuals	47.4	39.0	−18
Males	37.1	28.0	−25
White	33.9	26.4	−22
Nonwhite	51.0	36.2	−29
Females	54.1	45.4	−16
White	52.3	43.4	−17
Nonwhite	67.9	61.9	−9
Family members	20.4	13.8	−32
White	16.3	10.1	−38
Nonwhite	54.2	40.8	−25
Children under 18	26.1	17.9	−31
With male head	21.7	12.9	−41
White	17.0	9.6	−44
Nonwhite	58.0	38.5	−34
With female head	72.6	60.6	−17
White	66.6	47.9	−28
Nonwhite	82.7	77.6	−6
Families with—			
1 to 2 children	14.3	9.8	−31
White	11.7	7.7	−34
Nonwhite	42.5	29.5	−31
3 to 4 children	23.3	14.8	−36
White	18.2	10.8	−41
Nonwhite	67.1	45.0	−33
5 or more children	51.2	34.7	−32
White	43.5	24.8	−43
Nonwhite	71.0	63.9	−10
Families with male head	15.7	9.8	−38
White	13.2	8.2	−38
Nonfarm, under 65	9.6	6.1	−36
Nonwhite	43.2	27.0	−38
Nonfarm, under 65	36.2	23.8	−34
Families with female head	42.8	35.0	−18
White	35.2	27.7	−21
Nonfarm, under 65	35.6	29.3	−18
Nonwhite	71.5	60.5	−15
Nonfarm, under 65	71.1	61.0	−14
Farm persons	42.6	22.2	−48
Family heads	36.7	18.2	−50
White heads	30.9	14.0	−55
Nonwhite heads	83.1	70.9	−15
Children under 18	53.1	27.8	−48
White children	40.7	18.1	−56
Nonwhite children	92.5	77.1	−17
Nonfarm persons	20.0	15.0	−25
Family heads	16.7	12.1	−28
White heads	13.8	9.7	−29
Nonwhite heads	45.5	33.4	−27
Children under 18	22.3	17.3	−22
White children	18.2	11.9	−35
Nonwhite children	58.1	48.6	−16
Aged family heads	32.5	23.0	−29
White	30.6	21.8	−29
Nonwhite	65.5	43.4	−34

[4] At the end of July 1968, OEO released preliminary overall figures of the poverty population as of 1967, indicating a decline in that population to 25.9 million (down from more than 38 million in 1959). No other detailed numbers or categories were provided in the OEO release.

3.9 million children in poor nonwhite families headed by a *male*, but by 1966 this number had declined by 29 percent to only 2.8 million. In sharp contrast, the number of children in poor nonwhite families headed by a *female increased* by 44 percent from 1959 to 1966, from 1.7 million to 2.4 million.

It is significant that in this 7-year period, the *overall* percentage of persons in poverty declined from 22 percent to 15 percent; the drop from the 1959 rate was at the rate of 30 percent. But among nonwhite children with female heads, the decline in the rate of poverty was barely noticeable, only 6 percent (from 83 to 78 percent, the difference being 6 percent of the larger 1959 proportion). In other words, while the national percentage of all Americans living below the poverty line had declined at a rate of 30 percent from 1959 to 1966, there was little, if any, progress in "moving out of poverty" in this specific group. Indeed, as indicated above, the *number* of such poor children actually had increased in the 7-year interim.

What are the groups that moved out of poverty at above-average rates of exit since 1959? Essentially, they are to be found among the

TABLE E.—CHANGE IN NUMBERS OF POOR, 1959 TO 1966

[In millions]

	1959	1966	Percent change
All poor persons	38.9	29.7	−24
All poor families	8.3	6.1	−26
White	6.2	4.4	−29
Nonwhite	2.1	1.7	−18
Unrelated individuals	5.1	4.8	−5
White, 65 and over	2.2	2.4	+9
Nonwhite, 65 and over	.2	.3	+50
Children under 18	16.6	12.5	−25
With male head	12.6	8.0	−36
White	8.8	5.3	−40
Nonwhite	3.9	2.8	−29
With female head	4.0	4.5	+11
White	2.3	2.0	−13
Nonwhite	1.7	2.4	+44
Families with male head	6.4	4.3	−33
White	4.9	3.3	−34
Nonfarm, under 65	3.0	2.0	−31
Nonwhite	1.4	1.0	−29
Nonfarm, under 65	1.0	.8	−19
Families with female head	1.9	1.8	−6
White	1.3	1.1	−11
Nonfarm, under 65	1.0	.9	−7
Nonwhite	.7	.7	+3
Nonfarm, under 65	.6	.7	+9
Children in families with—			
1 to 2 children	3.7	2.6	−31
White	2.8	1.8	−35
Nonwhite	.9	.8	−16
3 to 4 children	6.0	4.3	−29
White	4.2	2.7	−35
Nonwhite	1.8	1.5	−16
5 or more children	6.9	5.9	−14
White	4.1	3.2	−22
Nonwhite	2.8	2.8	−1
Farm persons	6.8	2.4	−64
Family heads	1.4	.5	−65
White heads	1.0	.4	−65
Nonwhite heads	.4	.1	−64
Children under 18	3.2	1.1	−65
White children	1.9	.6	−67
Nonwhite children	1.3	.5	−61
Nonfarm persons	32.1	27.3	−16
Family heads	6.9	5.6	−19
White heads	5.2	4.0	−22
Nonwhite heads	1.7	1.6	−8
Children under 18	13.4	11.4	−15
White children	9.2	6.7	−27
Nonwhite children	4.2	4.7	+11

families headed by males, regardless of race. In 1959, there were 26.9 million members of poor families headed by a male (19.9 million whites, 7.0 million nonwhites), but by 1966 this figure had dropped sharply to only 17.6 million (12.5 million whites, 5.1 million nonwhites). The rate of poverty among such persons declined from 18 percent to 11 percent (from 15 percent to 9 percent for whites; from 49 percent to 32 percent for nonwhites). *In fact, the 1959–66 decrease in number of poor persons occurred only among male-headed families—and there was actually an increase in the number of poor persons in female-headed families.*

What is especially significant in these opposing trends is that children as a proportion of the poor in male-headed families have declined slightly (from 47 to 46 percent), while among members of female-headed families, their proportion *increased*, from 57 percent in 1959 to 62 percent 7 years later.

Today, children with female heads of the family constitute 36 percent of all poor children, while among the nonpoor, they make up no more than 5 percent of all children. Increasingly, the poor are made up of children, but especially of children from families headed by a female. Together with elderly unrelated individuals, the mothers and the children in such families are an ever-increasing part of the poverty population in America. In 1959, as a specific example, poverty among under-65, nonfarm families with female heads was 3.7 times the rate among similar families with male heads, but by 1966 it was 4.8 times the male rate. One might conclude from all this that for males as a whole in our economy at the present time, their odds for moving out of poverty seem to be superior to those for females, and that therefore antipoverty program efforts need to be directed more pointedly to the causes and solutions of this particular type of poverty, i.e., among families headed by females.